

195
648

Artibonite and Tombe rivers just outside the town. Today Cacos who went through this campaign will tell how sniping was carried on from the "English fort" on the heights to the east of the town and will recount how dangerous it was made for Marines to go unguarded even to the river-banks to draw water. Yet after two or three years the overthrow of the Caco forces brought peace once more to Mirebalais. And while the intervention of the United States has caused significant changes in the larger aspects of Haitian economy and in the political life of the Republic as a whole, yet as concerns the inner life of the people of this valley it seems to have passed without any discernible effect.

195
211

Today in the *place* are found three records of its past. The first of these, in the middle of the square, is a tall palm tree, which in Haiti is the emblem of its attainment of freedom and independence, and near it a rostrum symbolizing the authority of the central government. The second is the tomb of an overlord of Mirebalais when independent Haiti was not a republic. In florid lettering can be read the tribute engraved on its top:

211
195
● 764 *Ici*

*Dort de l'éternel sommeil
Pierre Cazimir de Vincent
décédé le 13 Août 1856, à l'âge de 71 ans
de son vivant Duc de Mirebalais
et*

*Commandant de la 4^{ème} Division
Militaire de la Province de
l'Ouest*

*"Passant, si tu admires les vertus militaires;
Révère les cendres de celui qui repose en ce lieu."*

*De la part de son amie
Delphonnaise Delva.*

BIRTH, CHILDHOOD, AND ADOLESCENCE 99

et preserve li cont'e tout mal. Ba li couraile pou' moin. Yun' jou', c'est li-mème qui allé remplacé nou' pou' servi nou' quan' nou' pas pè la. — O spirits, you who after the Great Master protect and deliver, I come to thank you. At the same time here is the child [you are] to protect for me. Do not let werewolves gain power over him. Grant him strength, health, and preserve him against all evil. Give him courage for me. One day he himself will replace us to serve you when we are no longer here."

851
852
539
782

Inasmuch as it is always necessary to invoke all three categories of supernatural beings, a similar invocation is pronounced for the dead and the spirits of twins. The rite, however, may be even simpler than this. If the family house of worship is near by, and the relationship group is one which numbers important members of the vodun cult, the child may be taken into this house, water thrown on the ground three times, and a candle lighted. In such cases no invocation is pronounced.

851
852
782
064]

Most mothers nurse their infants until they are about eighteen months old, though children may be weaned when as young as a year. Weaning is accomplished in a day or two. On the day selected, a bitter plant called *lalo* is spread on the mother's breasts, and when the child asks and is given the breast and refuses it because of the bitter taste, his favorite food is at once offered as a substitute. So efficacious is this method that one day's training is ordinarily enough. As a further precaution the child is not allowed to sleep with his mother for three or four nights after being weaned, so that he cannot take the breast at night, and is only given a place in the mother's bed after her milk has ceased to flow.

862
(824)

The earlier years of a child are in the main free from care, and, with due allowance for the differences in individual temperaments and family traditions, he is given much his own way. Young children make "mud food" and build play-houses. When somewhat older, they organize games of

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(855)

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tized at all, but merely respond to an innate ability to control them. To have a baptized *loa*, then, merely means that the worship of the *loa* is thereafter carried on in regular form. The worshipper learns how to *maré*, or "tie,"¹⁴ his spirit, so as to enjoy the social aspects of a vodun dance without fear that his *loa* will come unbidden. He gives it small offerings from time to time, and if it becomes insistent, or if his family is being troubled by its gods, he takes full part in the rituals that are staged.¹⁵

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In native idiom, a person when possessed is "mounted" by his god, and thereafter becomes his *ch'wèl*, or "horse." A devotee may come under the influence of a number of spirits during a single ceremony or dance, one *loa* succeeding another. The first deity that ever came to a person, however, for him constitutes the chief of his gods — his *maw' tite* — and the leader of any deities which may subsequently possess him. It is this *loa* alone that is "baptized," and this one alone "taken from his head" at his death; and, as far as he is concerned, all his other gods are under the control of this *maw' tite*, so that any agreement which he may enter into with this principal spirit must be respected by all the others.

Fundamentally, to be possessed by a *loa* means that an individual's spirit is literally dispossessed by that of the god. Personalities undergo radical change in accordance with the nature of the deity,¹⁶ while even the sex of the one possessed is disregarded if it differs from that of the god, so that, for example, a woman "mounted" by Ogun is always addressed as Papa Ogun.¹⁷ One wears the colors of the god and the ornaments he likes, eating and drinking those things he prefers, and otherwise manifesting his peculiar characteristics — rolling on the earth, if possessed by Damballa or chattering incessantly if by Gede.¹⁸

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Not everyone, by any means, is subject to states of possession. If the existence of individual differences in the capacity for religious expression be recognized, it becomes apparent

- for though some gods are feared far more than others, and some generally regarded with affection, even these latter bring great harm to a neglectful devotee, while the gods whose power validates the most malignant magic may, in certain situations, work for the good of their worshippers. Especially has there been great confusion in discussions of the so-called
- [114] Dom Pétro worship. Whether or not the origin of the term as given by St. Mery is correct — that it derives from the name of its founder, a Spanish Negro from Petit-Goâve²² — the statements that have been made concerning it are in the main misleading.²³ Thus, it is not true that the Pétro gods are unqualifiedly evil and the Rada deities unqualifiedly good; nor that blood sacrifices are made exclusively at Pétro ceremonies, while the services for other gods are innocent of such sacrificial offerings. The impression gathered in Mirebalais concerning the Pétro gods is that they are principally, though not exclusively, derived from the process of deification of powerful ancestors, which in Africa exists in forms that clearly explain the essential tradition that offers a basis for this custom as found in Haiti. This is reinforced by statements to the effect that most of the Pétro "squad" are Créole or native gods as
- 793 against the Guinée deities in the other groupings. One member of the vodun cult, indeed, made the concept of deifying
- 794 the powerful dead explicit, saying that Pétro was a great and
- 795 evil vodun priest who had died with the loa not "taken from
- 796 his head." For while a general principle in the cult of the
- [115] dead is that in the normal course of events those who die deliver up their souls to God, making the care for these souls primarily a concern of the Church, it is recognized that there are others such as this Dom Pedro who become loa. This occurs when an individual, usually a priest or priestess of the
- [116] vodun cult, who during his lifetime was known to possess great supernatural power, dies without having had his loa
- [117] withdrawn from his head." Burdened by these spirits, and therefore unable to get to God, his soul goes to the bottom of

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The cult of the dead² is to be differentiated from the worship of the *loa* and from the twin cult in that its African form has been modified to a far greater extent than these others by the influence of the Catholic Church. Yet, though the modes in which respect is shown the dead are principally those of the Church, the attitudes and beliefs which underlie the cult—the meticulousness with which the tranquillity of the dead is insured, the fear in which they are held, and, above all, their close association with magic as an important sanction behind this force—all these take on a distinctly African tinge. Perhaps the point of view taken toward the dead, and the manner in which the living cope with their power, can best be set forth at the outset by giving a sketch of the pattern of funerary and post-funeral rites, since these form the basis of the entire cult.

Wailing by all present begins with the approach of death. There are cries such as: "*Adieu, bon Dieu, Manman mao, wai, wai! Jodi-a tel-el-tel quitté mourwi! Côté m'ap wé li enco?*" —Good-by, O good God, O my mother, *wai, wai!* Today such-and-such a one has died! Where will I see him again?" The members of the family tie white or black kerchiefs about their waists, while others present use kerchiefs of any color at hand. The doors of any *humfort* or *maison de servitude* in the habitation are closed, and thorny acacia branches are placed in front of them, so that the dead, who are believed to go about everywhere, cannot "spoil" the sacred place by entering it.

The body is laid in a shallow trench dug in the floor of the room, and there washed and prepared for the funeral by a professional *baigneur des morts*—man or woman according to the sex of the dead—and his assistants. Some member of the family watches them to see that the "three drops" of moisture believed to be in every dead person's mouth are not caught on a cloth when the body is turned over, for they are held to have great potency for the working of black magic, and a sorcerer would give a great deal for them. Cold water,

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• 764 to which orange leaves and alcohol have been added, and soap
[198] are used to bathe the corpse, though limes are substituted for
orange leaves if the dead was tubercular.⁶ In earlier days cao-
lin (white lime) — sacred in Africa — was mixed with the
water, but this is no longer done. The corpse is turned on its
face to permit the washing of side and back, and the body is
dried with a towel, while the soiled water is either thrown
into a small ravine or into a hole dug for the purpose.

764 The corpse is next dressed in new clothing, unless the one
775 who died owned a wardrobe which included black garments.
No buttons or pins are used on new clothes, which are sewn
into place, and if the body is dressed in clothing he wore
while alive, the pockets are torn so that nothing can be
[198] carried away in them. Shoes were at one time put into the
coffin — or sandals in the country — beside the dead, rather
than on his feet, so that he would not be tempted to walk,
but today in Mirbalais and the surrounding country the dead
are buried barefoot or in stocking feet, since, as it was ex-
plained, "otherwise they make too much noise as they go
about." Black stockings are always used. In the coffin are
placed a rosary, a scapulary, soap, a comb, a handkerchief, a
pipe (if the dead had been a smoker), and face powder; but
no strong drink is included because, were the spirit of the
dead person to become drunk, this would be dangerous; and
no money, for if so much as a single sou were given the dead,
he would return and take the rest of the family wealth. Simi-
larly no food is put in the coffin, for otherwise it is believed
that the ghost would be so busy eating he would never find
the route to the sky. Pins are carefully excluded, because if the
dead were given sharp objects, he would return to prick
764 the family. If it is suspected that death had been caused by
775 sorcery, and the soul of the dead may later be taken to aid in
824 working black magic, some plants of the type called *hokoli*
are placed in the coffin with the body. These plants are said to
contain so many seeds that since one who comes to take the

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dead must first count them, he can never accomplish this before daylight. From these precautions, it is evident that for the Haitian the reality of existence after death is no fictional one, as is even more vividly illustrated in the answer given to the question whether or not a flute, such as young boys play, would be placed in the coffin of a lad: "What! And have the dead going about all the time blowing it?"

When dressed, the body is placed on a mat or mattress or in a hammock and covered with a clean cloth. A *bande de machoire*, which goes under the chin and over the head to hold the jaw in place, in earlier days, as today in remote sections of the valley, served the double purpose of making possible the identification of a ghost as such, and of keeping the moisture inside the mouth. At present, however, it is usually removed when the body is placed in the coffin. In earlier times also, as today among the peasants in the hills, the nostrils and ears were plugged with cotton. The body and head are shaved of all hair, and the finger- and toe-nails clipped; hair and clippings are later placed in the coffin and buried with the body. The eyes usually close naturally; it is a bad sign if they do not, indicating, as it does, that magic has caused death. Putrefaction, or any unusual sign connected with death such as when a cadaver swells, or a body remains warm and perspires, or, as mentioned, when the eyes remain open, is held to be an indication that the soul has been taken by a sorcerer and the person "sold"—all signalling a "bad" death and requiring that a dagger be struck into the body and burial take place immediately.

Some time later, the *prêtre amienne* comes to read prayers if the death has occurred in the countryside, or the priest of the local Catholic church if in the town or near it. After the prayers have been said and relatives and friends have addressed the dead and "given him commissions," such as "Say good-day to my mother," "Ask my father to help us, for the weather has been bad this year for the crops . . ." the body is

• 764 placed in the coffin, which must always be used for burial. Even if a person is poor, "he can always borrow a plank from a neighbor, for people are charitable in matters of death," or, if a family cannot immediately afford to have carpenters make the coffin, they are paid later, a few gourdes at a time. This [869] also holds for the professional bather of corpses, who receives three to five gourdes in the countryside, fifteen gourdes in Mirebalais, and, it is said, perhaps fifty in Port-au-Prince. A pig or a goat is killed to feed those who dig the grave and carry the coffin, "so they can do their work well." Otherwise these men receive no payment, for "people do such things for each other."

[864] [851] The wake,* which takes place on the night of death, is one of the most important ceremonies in the cycle of rites for the dead. Wakes are held for all dead, even for very young children if they have been baptized, though if a baby dies before baptism, it is buried without ceremony in a little box in the courtyard of the habitation. During the wake the body lies in the second room of the house, the long white candle used at the deceased's first communion standing lighted at his feet. If the dead was not a communicant, newly bought candles are placed at his head and feet. The wife and children either stay with the corpse or are near by with friends. The one who bathed the corpse remains constantly at its side as the members of the family come and go, since the body must never remain alone. Wailing goes on all night, and as more relatives arrive, those already there echo their cries.

[533] On a table in another room a white cloth is spread, and a crucifix, images of the saints, flowers, lighted candles, and a lamp of oil are placed on it. The singers bring their song-books, since the canticles of the Church are almost the only songs heard. At times songs are specially composed for the occasion, but these always concern themselves with death. Those who stand before the table, principally women, lead the singing, the others acting as a chorus. People come and go

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and, wearying of the singing, join the group outside the house, where those playing games and the story-tellers are gathered. One popular game is "forseits," and a forfeit, if reclaimed by a girl, requires the singing of a *chanson de romance*, or if by a man, calls for the recitation of a poem or a humorous folk-tale. Before a forfeit is returned, all sing to a hand-clapping accompaniment:

*C'est bien bon,
C'est bien bon,
Aha!*

It is very good.
It is very good,
Aha!

Card-games, such as *mariai* (marriage), *trois-sept*, and *be-zique*, are also played. All these games are entered into with zest, for an important purpose in holding the wake is to amuse the dead, whose body lies near by, and thus send him away in good humor. When drinks are passed, the recipients must make three libations before drinking, one explanation holding that this is in accordance with the formula Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, another that the offering is for the *loa*, the dead, and the *marnusa*. At about five o'clock in the morning the angelus closes the wake, after which most of those present leave, and only close friends and relatives remain to help with preparations for the funeral. This must take place the day following death, not only because of a legal requirement, but because of the fact that were a body to remain unburied for two nights, the expense of two wakes would have to be met. Before the ceremony of burial takes place, small children are often passed over the coffin three times, in leave-taking, that the spirit of the dead may not return for them.

The funeral itself is held in accordance with the rites of the Church, the difference between funerals consisting principally in the elaborateness of the ritual and the length of time the church bells are tolled, which in turn is determined by the ability of the family of the dead to meet the varying fees. Thus at the funeral of the mother of the *député* from Mire-

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764 balais the setting was most elaborate, in striking contrast to the bareness of the rites for a young man who was a *'ti moun* in a town family and came from poor peasant folk in the hills. Whatever the type of funeral, the coffin, carried by four men, leaves the house of death preceded by the priest and his acolytes. After mass has been sung, the priest and mourners walk in procession to the graveyard, where the body is placed in a tomb if one has been prepared for it, or interred underground, awaiting the building of a tomb. Before his death, should a person in a quarrel decree that certain others must never touch his coffin, and should these for the sake of public opinion attempt to carry it, it is believed that the coffin will fall to the ground. Such occurrences are extremely rare and cause a great deal of gossip. Following the funeral, friends sometimes remain with the mourners for several days, caring for the house and doing the cooking; otherwise the women of the household are obliged to take up their work at once. The trench which held the body during the washing is filled in as soon as the corpse is taken from the house, and a smudge of orange leaves is made "to take away the odor of death." Objects employed in the last illness, such as the mat on which the body lay and the towel used to dry the corpse, are taken to a large river and washed, after which they may be used by the heirs, provided death did not result from a contagious disease. Work in the fields is also resumed a few days after the funeral, for custom does not dictate when the mourners may again take up their tasks.

765 Next in the cycle of the rituals of death is the *dernière prière*, which ends a novena.⁹ It was stated that the novena must begin on the Saturday after burial, so that it might end on a Sunday night, but one such ceremony actually occurred on a Friday night, which would be in accordance with the assertion that the *dernière prière* may take place on Monday, Friday, or Saturday nights. Others, however, maintained that this is only town custom, and that in the countryside this rite

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tainier to a crossroad, where it is deposited as an offering for Legba, and its contents are eaten by the dogs, who significantly, in Dahomey are the animals sacred to this deity. Following this, the adults enter the closed room, to feast at the laden table.

Several days after the funeral two gourdes are paid a priest — "a real one," not a *prêt savanne* — to chant a *libera* at the grave, a rite that must be repeated each year on All Saints' Day. Each year, also, food is given the dead, though "not so much as following a funeral." Chickens, beans, rice, and coffee are the principal part of such an offering, for which no priest need be called, as the ceremony is merely to let the dead know that they are not forgotten. Every three or five years, however, a large *mangé* must be given for all the family dead, and if held on the family habitation, there is social dancing, where such favorites of the ancestors as the *martinique*, the *banda*, the *calebaue*, and the *zesse* are danced.⁷

Differences in procedure mark various modes of death. When a person is killed by lightning, a justice of the peace must be called and the burial is performed at once. Such a one has no "last prayer," because, death by lightning being a punishment of God, it is felt that the dead probably made an oath which he subsequently violated. Those killed by lightning or who die of smallpox are not mourned, but no explanation could be obtained for this obvious survival of African custom. If a leper has concealed his disease, mourning is worn for him, though if the cause of death is generally known this is forgone. There is customarily no mourning for suicides, and never where the regulations of the Church are rigorously applied.

If the dead person was a *vodun* priest or otherwise had strong *connaissance*, steps are taken before his death to "remove the *loa* from his head" so that his soul will not go under the water, for, as has been explained, such souls are held to be powerful spirits which may cause their family much harm

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if, after a time, an expensive and troublesome ceremony is not performed to bring them out and lodge them in a jar. The *hungan* who performs the rite of removing these *loa* is preferably himself a member of the family and is usually left alone with one or two assistants and an elderly relative of the dead, but if the family includes no *hungan*, the one who is called, even though greatly trusted, is most carefully watched, because a strange priest might take for himself the valued gods of the dead, leaving only the weak ones. The *hungan* stands in place and calls the name of the dead. He puts some of the hair of the dead in the jar or in a calabash, with which the *loa* is supposed to go, and, unless another member of the family, nominated to receive the *connaissance* of the dead, is present, the jar or calabash is sealed until these spirits can be "given" to a successor.

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No special purification is needed for a house where death has occurred except when the deceased was tubercular or a leper, when everything except his money is buried or thrown in some unfrequented place. The body of one who has died of smallpox, though washed, is buried as soon after death as possible without being enclosed in a coffin. Those who die of smallpox or leprosy, suicides, or persons shot as a punishment for crime are not buried in the communal cemetery, but in special sections of the graveyard, the lepers and victims of smallpox being separated from the others, for the Church declares these have died of the plague. One who drowns is buried at the riverside where his body is recovered, though if the corpse is not too badly decomposed, the authorities give permission, and the family of the dead can afford the expense of transportation, the body may be brought home. Children are buried in the cemetery, but, on the principle that "the young must serve their elders," the funeral of a child is attended only by those relations who are younger than the dead; for in Haiti, as in Africa, it is not held seemly that the young should be followed to the grave by their elders. At the house, however,

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Novo, Dahomey. The members are, of course, not known, but there is always gossip, and occasionally a man, when quarreling, says: "Take care! You don't know who I am. . . ."

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Baka, *loups-garous*, and *démons* are not the only supernatural beings that a person may encounter from time to time. Though not all are creatures of magic, and not all are evil, all of them are treated with due caution. Such are the "river people" — children with six fingers, who are believed to belong to the Mait' Source, the Master of the Stream, and are destined to become *hungans* — this being an example of the good that may come from such supernatural association — or persons with light hair. Those with light hair are more dangerous, however, since occasionally such folk are taken for a time under the water, the men by female spirits and the women by males. One person in Mirebalais told of a distant cousin who disappeared as she went to the river to draw water. She was mourned as dead, but returned after a year and was welcomed home. As she began to recount her adventures, however, she was struck dumb, and never recovered her speech. Another spoke of his experience as a boy with such a water-spirit, a *Maitresse d'Eaux*. With a companion, he was walking along the bank of the Tombe River, when a woman was seen sitting on a rock combing her long light-colored hair. The other lad was invited to help her and went nearer, step by step, until, as he almost touched the comb, he turned and ran. Some time later he died.

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Another category of spirits, already referred to in discussing the cult of the dead, are *zombi*. To understand their nature, however, the use of magic to bring about death or its simulacra, and the measures taken to guard against this, must be first considered. In the preceding chapter it was observed how *hoholi* seeds are placed in the coffin of one suspected of an "unnatural" death to prevent the sorcerer from reaping the fruits of his deed. A cross of pine-wood, made by the *hungan* and empowered by him to repel evil, is frequently also put

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with it, or the body is made to lie face downwards in the coffin, since the discomfort of this position causes the spirit of the dead to avenge itself on the sorcerer who caused the death.

When a man has been killed by magic, his surviving relatives go to a *hungan* or a *bocor* to discover the culprit. The names of those suspected of the deed are called. Before the diviner stands a pottery jar filled with magically treated water. When the unwilling image of the guilty one finally appears, the *hungan* plunges his knife into it, and as the water turns red, those watching know that when the specified number of days have passed, the guilty one will be dead.¹² Should a suspect be innocent, the image of the Virgin Mary or of St. John is sometimes seen when he is called; but if one known to be guilty does not appear, it is proof that his magic is stronger than that used to call him. Recourse is then had to a powerful *wanga*, or poison, or to the spirit of someone dead, an *dme abandonée* who has led a life of evil and himself been a murderer. "They would certainly not send the spirit of the one just killed. He is too green" — to bring death to the killer. If none of these measures prevail, no further acts of revenge are attempted against the suspect, the feeling being that he has supplied himself with too powerful magic to allow effective revenge to be taken.

On occasion, an apparent death is felt not to be a real death, but rather the simulacrum of death brought about by the machination of a sorcerer. The corpse is thereupon given poison or stabbed with a dagger, to make certain that an apparent death becomes an actual one, but the person who stabs the body must stand behind it in order that the corpse as slave of the sorcerer may not reveal who had stabbed him when summoned, and thus make of the one who had robbed him of his prey a substitute victim. If poison has not been administered to the corpse, or if the body was not stabbed, after the funeral the sorcerer recovers the body, which, deprived of its soul, works for him as a *zombi*, only returning to the grave when the time decreed by God for his natural death is reached, or if he is accidentally fed salt.

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NOTES ON THE TEXT

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CHAPTER XI

- 1 Compare Parsons (I), 173-4, where the cult of twins is discussed and some of its rites described.
- 2 Price-Mars (I), 35, mentions this as a power believed to be held by twins.
- 3 The phrase "cult of the dead" as employed here must be sharply differentiated from its misuse by Seabrook (82 ff.).
- 4 Cf. Price-Mars (I), 34.
- 5 Price-Mars (I), 34, speaks of the custom of always burying charms with the dead.
- 6 Wakes have been described by Seabrook, 89-91, and others but in such a manner that it is difficult to dissect out the reality of what was witnessed from the imaginative elements.
- 7 Cf. Wirkus, 221-3. The custom of giving the dead food at the grave, which he describes, is not followed when burial occurs in the Mirebalais town cemetery, nor, seemingly, elsewhere in the valley.
- 8 See the description of a commemorative rite for the dead in Price-Mars (I) 148-50.
- 9 This is a rule followed in West African practice.

CHAPTER XII

- 1 An interesting attempt to account for this is found in St. John, 230-1, where he speaks of the "two Vaudoux sects," one good and one evil.
- 2 St. Mery, i, 36. The term *garde* is almost entirely absent in later writings, the more sensational *wanga* (*ouanga*) being preferred.
- 3 Léger, 55, note 34.
- 4 Cf. Dorsainvil (I), 171.
- 5 No better summary of this could be had than that in Parsons (I), 179, written after a single séance with a *gangan*.
- 6 Pp. 324-31.
- 7 Mr. J. C. Trevor informs me that during a recent field-trip to the Virgin Islands he discovered books of magic in common use, obtained from a Chicago dealer.
- 8 It is not without interest to note that in the case reported in a Port-au-Prince newspaper and reproduced in facsimile by Seabrook, 334, concerning a woman from the commune of Mirebalais accused of sorcery, the name of the woman was *Azéman*.
- 9 Cf. Parsons (II), 596.
- 10 See above, pp. 94-5.
- 11 The closest correspondence

22 *The Loa*

one. Sometimes a loa who is making life too hard for a devotee will be retired without a replacement. The "washing of the head" must be accompanied by ritual safeguards, and all possible circumstances must be taken into account by the officiating cult priest. There are many stories of people who became mentally deranged as a result of the removal of their loa from their heads.

The mait' tête must also be removed from the head of a person who dies. Should this not be done, the spirit of the deceased will go to reside "below the water" and may cause trouble for the family. This loa is usually transferred to a special jar as a temporary resting place, and later perhaps into the head of another member of the family.

Though the loa is a powerful ruling force in the life of the individual, the human "horse" has controls over his deity too. He may reproach or admonish his loa for bad behavior or for failing to protect him. He may expose the loa's irresponsibility in public through the use of songs in religious rites. And though the loa is frequently encouraged to "enter," steps may be taken to restrain him from possession. This is called *marre loa*—"tying the loa." A woman may "tie" her loa by fixing a hairpin in her hair in a special way. A man may do it by placing his hands in cold water.³

Nevertheless, the loa are always lurking in the background. They are a constant and dramatic element in the religious life of the people. They may sometimes be controlled by the houngan, but they are an authority stronger than the priesthood. They give advice, courage, consolation, and status to their followers. They add much to an otherwise hard and ungenerous environment and evoke remembrances of Africa from which the Haitians' ancestors were uprooted. They can also cause concern and anxiety; for the loa are not always benevolent, and they are frequently unpredictable.

Many of the loa are ancient deities, sub-founders and ancestors who loom out of a misty, half-forgotten past. Nananbouclou, Legba, and Ayida Wèdo have been known for many lifetimes in Dahomey. Chango, Ogoun, and Loko were old spirits in Nigeria before the first slave ships sailed from Africa to the New World. Their names and many others in present-day Haiti come from an ancient lore. They recall places, tribes, and old kingdoms from Senegal in northwestern Africa to the heart of the Congo. They are a bond which holds the people of Haiti to Africa. In the mountains people sometimes say, "Haiti is the child of Dahomey," or "Haiti is the child of Guinée." The gods divide their time between their Haitian and their African children.

Yet in some respects the Haitians' concept of their loa is no longer purely African. The African religious patterns have been infiltrated by the lore

32 *Death Rites*

769 The dead twins are offered food in special earthen or gourd bowls. In any
845 market place where pottery is sold you will find the joined marassa double or triple bowls. The annual rites for the marassas are routine, but once every five years there is a *grande service* for them.

[796] It is not merely the twins of one's immediate family that are served, but twins—that is, the spirit of twins—in general. They are supplicated even when a family knows of no incidence of twins. In part, this precaution is a recognition that there may have been twins among ancestors long dead and forgotten. It is also recognition of a twin spirit as a separate force affecting all people. The twin spirit has been personified in the loa named Marassa. The child born after twins is believed by many Haitians to be even "stronger" and more to be placated than twins themselves. He is known as a *doçu* if a boy, *doça* if a girl. Their patron loa are known as Marassa Doçu and Marassa Doça. The patron loa of triplets is Marassa Trois. Triplets are regarded as a special category of twins. Some Haitians, in fact, believe that the twins are merely a partial manifestation of the group of three, which is completed on the birth of the doçu or doça. In the marassa feast, triplets are served in the triple clover-leaf bowl, as are twins in combination with their doçu or doça. It is also believed by some that the child born before twins is "weak" both in physical vitality and psychic powers, because his strength has been sapped by the marassas who have followed him.

796 For some Haitians the loa Marassa is the most potent of forces to be
788 placated at the time of death. They hold that he is only incidentally the
784 patron of twins and triplets. His significance is said to lie in the fact that he is the spirit of the first of all human children who died. And as the child precedes the man, Marassa is the first and foremost of all loa. When a service is held for Marassa, he is given foods and beverages that all children love.

769 Rites for the dead continue endlessly for the living. Before a child is witness to a death in his own family he may observe many rituals for the family ancestors, twins, and the unknown dead. For those who are a part of Vodoun, the cycle is a perpetual one in an endless system of integration and continuity.

795 Special rites are held to remove the loa from the head of a deceased person. It is believed that the spirit of a person who has not had his loa removed will be restive and perhaps will even cause difficulties for his family and his descendants. And there is also the matter of the loa's welfare. The *mal' tête* is, in a sense, a captive in the head of the person who has died. The head is his home. But should the corpse be taken to the graveyard without the loa's having been removed, the loa would refuse to be buried

Death Rites 33

with the corpse. He wants nothing to do with the domain of the Gèdés. He liberates himself from the corpse at the cemetery and retires "below the water." He is no longer a friend and benefactor of the family. He cannot be inherited by the children of the deceased. Such controls as the deceased once exercised over him are dissipated. He may, in fact, be angered at the treatment he has received and return only to harass the family. Thus, if a family fails to have the *mait' tête* of one of its members properly removed at death, it may be persecuted afterward by the "spirit" of the dead ancestor and the loa as well.

The rite of dispossessing a deceased person of his loa is called *déssounin*, or *déssouné*. The essence of it is the transference of the *mait' tête* from the head of the dead person into a special receptacle, an earthen jar called a *govi* or *pot tête*. Sometimes it is transferred to the head of a child in the family, though usually this comes later.

There have been many descriptions of this ritual, and they seem to show that, though the tradition is a constant one, the specific patterns of the services are variable. Different regions, different cult centers, and different houngans conduct the rites in different ways.

Eugene Aubin wrote, for example:

On the day of death, the deceased is placed standing up; the *papaloi* [houngan] conducts the rites which retire the *myssivie* [loa] from the body and introduce it into a jar, which is then carefully sealed. On the ninth day, after the feast for the dead, the jar is broken and liberty given to the loa.

Melville Herskovits reported:

If the dead person was a Vodun priest or otherwise had strong *connaissance*, steps are taken . . . "to remove the loa from his head" so that his soul will not go under the water, for, as has been explained, such souls are held to be powerful spirits which may cause the family much harm if, after a time, an expensive and troublesome ceremony is not performed to bring them out and lodge them in a jar. . . . The *houngan* stands in place and calls the name of the dead. He puts some of the hair of the dead in the jar or in a calabash, into which the loa is supposed to go, and, unless another member of the family, nominated to receive the *connaissance* of the dead, is present, the jar or calabash is sealed until these spirits can be "given" to a successor.

As Herskovits understands it, it is the "soul" of the dead person that would go to live "under the water," rather than the loa. This would appear to be a fusion of two separate elements—the wandering, troublesome "spirit" of a dead person and the *mait' tête* who retires "under the water." Actually, Haitians are not always consistent in their explanations of what happens, or of the difference between loa and souls. On the hounfor altar there may be some *govis* that contain "souls" or "spirits" and others that contain loa; though the distinction is readily appreciated, Haitians are

* [Translated from the French of Aubin, *En Haïti*, p. 212
cf. P. 350, Category 116, Analyst]
* [Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley*, pp. 213-214
cf. P. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst]

34 *Death Rites*

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sometimes hard put to explain the similarity of treatment of these two categories.

Another investigator, Alfred Métraux, has provided a vivid description given by a Haitian of a ceremony of removing the loa. In this instance the corpse was not placed in an upright position as described by Aubin but was laid on a specially prepared bed. Attending the body were the houngan, his hounsi, and a child of the dead man who was to receive the liberated loa.

The child . . . grasps in his hand a black-and-white or a white cock. On the ground in front of the bed they arrange a fine white napkin. On top of it there are syrup, candles . . . , *safo*, and other things. After they have finished sprinkling water, clapping their hands, singing to the loa, they all go around the bed of the dead person. The child, with the cock in his hand, makes the rounds with the houngan. They wave the rooster, they wave it back and forth two, three, four, five, six times over the dead person's head. During this time all those present get possessed by the loa, sing, clap their hands. The dead person's bed begins to creak. The houngan climbs on the bed and grabs the dead person's two arms. . . . He pulls him to a sitting position. The child (into whose head the loa is to be transferred) strikes the chicken three times on the head of the dead person. He lets go the chicken, and the chicken flies up and starts to run all around the room, smashing pots and vessels. They grab the chicken and let it go in the air three times, shouting: *Ai boko loa!* Immediately the loa goes into the head of the dead person's child.

The houngan cited by Métraux is described as pulling the corpse to a sitting position, but more commonly it is believed that the houngan has the power to make the body sit up by itself. A man from Jérémie explained it this way:

"The body is laid out on a mat. The houngan shakes his asson over the dead man, and talks to the loa in the head. He calls the loa's name: 'Changogolo! Changogolo! Changogolo!' He calls, calls, calls. He doesn't call the dead man's name, he calls the mait' tête. 'Changogolo! Changogolo! Get up! Wake up! Sit up!' The corpse sits up. It even talks. Then the houngan says, 'Lie down!' And the corpse lies down. But it is not the dead man who sits up. The dead man is dead. It is the mait' tête who has forced the body to sit up. After this the houngan takes the loa from the head and puts it in a pot tête. Then the body can be buried. And afterward the loa can be put in the head of someone else or freed. Or the houngan may keep the loa in the pot tête and sell it to someone who needs a loa to work for him. If they buried the corpse without a *déssouain*, the loa would resent it and go away below the water."

George Eaton Simpson has written an excellent description of a ceremony for removal of the loa from the head of a deceased houngan. The ceremony is described in *Hall and others, Haitian Creole, American Anthropological Association, Memoir No. 54, pp. 188-189. Cf. P. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst*

[Simpson, "Four Vodun Ceremonies" *Journal of American Folklore*, April-June, 1946, pp. 155-162. Cf. P. 350, Cat. 116. -- Analyst]

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rites took place in the region of Plaisance in northern Haiti. Such a ceremony, Simpson notes, may be attended by several hounsans other than the Vodoun priest who is officially in charge. They "share the obligation and pleasure of conducting this service for their colleague, their former rival, and perhaps their former enemy." In a room of the deceased hounsan's house is the body, attended by the family, relatives, close friends, and the officiating hounsan and his assistants.

... Near the body, which is covered by a sheet, are placed a jug and a new canari (a large earthen jar). The officiating hounsan makes the sign of the cross, mumbles a few ritual formulas, and taking a spoon puts some "manger les morts" (special food for the dead) in the canari: plantains, yams, bananas, tairauts, sweet potatoes, corn meal, roasted corn, bread, cakes, rice, millet, meat, chicken, pistachin, chopped coconut, and other kinds of food. He then adds some water and stirs this mixture. ... The other hounsans perform the same rite. The family, friends, and others in the room imitate the acts of the hounsans with the green branches which they hold in their hands. In a grave voice and with solemn gestures the officiant then appeals to the *lous* with songs and prayers. He invites them to come to the aid of their faithful servant, to protect him in the other world as they have protected him in this world. Following the songs and prayers the leader pronounces these words:

"Innocent! A good man has left us!

The mother of the children weeps.

Weep, console yourselves.

Boss Accelon, he was here.

He died.

Master Pierre Jean-Baptiste, he was here.

He died.

General Baptiste, he was here.

He died.

Marius who was left,

He died.

But Brother Joseph survives,

We will cry, we will console ourselves." X

The weeping and the cries redouble, but the *père-accelon* [père' avane] and the hounsan carry on. In the other room the *père-accelon* solemnly intones:

"I have only one soul

Which must be saved.

By the eternal flame,

I must preserve it." X

The officiating hounsan speaks directly to the dead man: "Boss Marius, here is a canari that your heirs have especially prepared for you so that in the future you will not have any trouble and demand other sacrifices of them. You others, the dead, are always unreasonable. Because you have peace you forget that the times are hard and that on this earth we unfortunate men are crushed by suffering. Leave your family in peace after this service, Boss Marius. Do not torment them, and do not send illnesses to their children or misery to their older people. You were always a good

X [As translated by Courlander from Simpson's Creole text, *ibid.*, p. 156. The preceding paragraph is from p. 155. Cf. p. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst]

10 [Translated by Courlander from The Creole of S. Mason's text. Cf. p. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst]

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539 father when you were living. Continue to protect your family after death. If you need other services give abundantly to your heirs in order to obtain satisfaction. Oh, good father, good servant, good parent, good friend! Good-bye! Do not forget us as we shall not forget you."¹¹

[787] Then the houngan goes to the canarie, strikes it three times with a piece of palm bark, and chants an invocation to the loa and to God, while members of the family dance where they stand, shaking the green branches they hold. There follows an invocation to twins. After a number of loa have "entered" the service, as manifested by possessions, the houngan undertakes to find out how death came to the deceased man. An assistant brings the sacred divining shells¹² of the dead man, and the officiating houngan throws them on the floor, pours tafia three times, and lights a candle. The shells are then consulted. Three times he goes through the procedure of casting the shells and consulting them. Later he announces that "the death of Boss Marius is not the death of an ordinary man, that he is now resting in La Ville-au-Camp (capital of the loa which is 'under the water'), and that the loa will continue to protect his descendants provided that they show themselves worthy of protection."¹³ There is more singing and ritual, and then the canarie is covered. The loa from the head of Marius has found a temporary resting place. A little later in the service "the houngan raises the canari as high as possible, almost as high as his face, as he repeats the last line: "Where may I find refuge?" With a quick movement the canari is shattered. The food is scattered, the loa are satisfied, and the crowd breaks into disorderly flight. . . .¹⁴ A few hours later the body of the deceased is buried.

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796 It is obvious that these rituals vary a good deal according to regional practices and according to the importance of the persons for whom they are conducted. Furthermore, there is a good deal of difference of opinion among Haitians as to what actually takes place when the malt' tite is taken from the head of the deceased man.

793 Although the pret' savane (bush priest) is subsidiary to the houngan at 764 death rites, his is nevertheless a conspicuous presence. He may begin the 184 services with prayers for the dead, in which the family joins, while the houngan remains in the background. Later, the houngan takes over. In certain regions, however, the pret' savane is dispensed with altogether, his function being absorbed by the houngan.

764 As reported by Herkovits, the wake for the dead is one of the most important ceremonies in the death rites. He says:

[766] Wakes are held for all dead, even for very young children if they have been baptized, though if a baby dies before baptism, it is buried without ceremony in a little box in the courtyard of the habitation. . . . The wife and the children either say

¹¹ [This and the preceding paragraph are from Simpson, *OP. CIT.*, p. 156. Cf. p. 350, Category 116. --Analyst]
¹² [For footnote, see Category 116, p. 350. --Analyst]
¹³ [SIMPSON, *OP. CIT.*, p. 159, Cf. p. 359, Category 116. --Analyst]
¹⁴ [Ibid., p. 161. Cf. p. 350, Category 116. --Analyst]

Death Rites 37

with the corpse or are nearby with friends. The one who bailed the corpse remains constantly at its side as members of the family come and go, since the body must never be alone.¹⁸ 764 ●

But outside the house another kind of activity goes on. There the young people usually gather to sing gay songs, to play games, and to listen to stories. A professional storyteller, or a nonprofessional of repute, is called upon to entertain the children. He may give an entire night to Bouki and Malice stories, or to *contes* with interspersed songs in which the audience participates. Special singing games, stick games, and card games are played. But the drums are silent, both in the dead person's house and in the countryside at large. Rhythms for the game songs are provided by hand-clapping, or by vocal sounds which simulate percussion instruments. 764
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Burial ceremonies vary according to local tradition and the status of the deceased person. Near the little fishing village of Petit Goave in south-western Haiti, I witnessed a funeral cortege which might have been seen almost anywhere in the country. It was led by the widow of the dead man. She rode on a white horse, followed by four men carrying the dead body on a litter made of plain planks. There was no coffin, the body being covered only by its white shroud.¹⁹ Behind the corpse plodded a group of twelve or fifteen peasants, friends and relatives of the dead man. Some of them had just come in from the fields and still carried their machetes in their hands. Others carried short *cocumacague* sticks, which are believed useful for warding off *baka* and other demons who lurk along the path of the traveler. 764
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The woman on the horse lamented loudly. When she came to where other peasants stood respectfully at the road's edge, she stopped her horse and faced them, raising her voice to an anguished pitch, calling on them to take note of her bereavement and of the fine virtues of the dead man. Some of the spectators whom she addressed, standing with their hats in hand, nodded and tried to say consoling words, such as "*Oui Manman, li grand mounn*" (Yes, Mama, he was a fine man), or "*Quand Bondieu vif ou li prend*" (When God wants you he takes you). A market woman with a load on her head suddenly became possessed by a *lwa* as the cortege passed her. This seemed to increase the anguish of the widow, who lamented with increased vigor.

The four men carrying the corpse sometimes moved in a zigzag course, first to one side of the road, then to the other. When the procession came to a crossroad it stopped momentarily. The *houngan*, scarcely distinguishable from the other peasants in blue denim, came forward and stood in the center of the crossroads shaking his tiny hand bell and calling upon *Mak' Kalfu* (Master of the Crossroads) to grant safe passage. While he [793]
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¹⁸ [Herskovits, *op. cit.*, p. 208. Cf. p. 350, Category 116, *Amér.*]
¹⁹ [For foot note, See Category 116, p. 350. --Analyst]

38 *Death Rites*

- 764 invoked the loa, the pallbearers brought the body forward as though to go straight ahead, but then they began to lurch and sway as though an invisible force were pushing them around. They veered as though to take the right turn, and again they lurched and staggered. At last they turned toward the left, and in this direction they found the road clear. The houngan thanked the Master of the Crossroads, the widow took her place at the head of the procession, and it proceeded on its way to the cemetery.

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762 In the services for a dead houngan described by Simpson, the body is placed in a coffin, which is carried to all the places sacred to the loa of the houngan before being taken to the cemetery. First it is taken to the sacred trees where the loa reside, then to the sacred spring "whose waters have cured many sicknesses which physicians had pronounced incurable . . .

(823) The bearers of the coffin circle the spring several times. The coffin is swung [toward] each of the four cardinal points." Afterward the procession continues its way to the burial ground.²

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761 But the treatment given to the dead may vary according to the manner in which they died. Leyburn notes, for example, that "a person struck by lightning . . . would have no ceremonies at all, for lightning is an act of God."³ It may well be that the Haitian rationale for not holding ceremonies for an individual killed by lightning is that God has already held the final ceremony. But in the Haitian mind all deaths are, in the last analysis, acts of God, even though magic, poison, or accident may have played an immediate part. Why, then, should the corpse struck by lightning be treated so differently? The answer would appear to lie in a custom of the Yoruba of dispensing with all burial rites for persons killed by lightning, such persons being considered enemies of the lightning deity Change. In Dahomey, Herskovits reports, the same attitude prevails in regard to persons killed by lightning:

If a person is killed by lightning he . . . stands convicted by this fact of some grave crime which has incurred the displeasure of the god of the Thunder Pantheon (Xevioso). A person so killed is never buried by his family, but the body is turned over to the chief priest and co-members of that deity. It is believed that a man killed in this fashion remains upright until the chief priest questions him and forces him to confess the crimes he had committed to be so punished. No one touches any of the belongings of such a man, not even his money. The house in which he lived is allowed to go to ruin, an area of palm fronds being placed around it to guard against anyone entering it. The movable property of such a man, his clothes, his tools, and his dishes, are thrown away at the crossroads . . .⁴

766 The burial of a Haitian who dies of smallpox likewise differs from that of one who dies a "normal" death. The victim of smallpox is buried without a coffin in a segregated part of the cemetery. The reason for this lies
2 [Simpson, *Op. Cit.*, p. 161. Cf. P 350 Category 116--Analysis]
2 [Leyburn, *The Haitian People*, p. 156. Cf. P 350, Category 116--Analysis]
2 [Herskovits, *Dahomey, I*, 398. Cf. P 350, Category 116--Analysis]

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beyond the obvious fear of contagion. In his study of Dahomey, Herkovits notes:

... Smallpox is believed to be sent as a punishment for grave offenses in the eyes of those [the *hagbes*] deities, and it is taken to indicate that either the dead person himself or a member of his family has committed some heinous crime such as the practice of black magic. A person who dies of smallpox may only be buried after permission has been given by the chief priest of the Earth cult.⁷⁶⁶

Thus, in Haiti, though the connections with the past are clouded, it is clear that victims of lightning and smallpox are treated as a special class of criminals or malefactors.

Ordinary malefactors such as malevolent criminals and murderers—until recent years, at least—were not buried in the common graveyard. They, too, were segregated at the periphery of the cemetery or buried at the edge of a trail or road where the traffic would not permit them to rest and where their graves would be under constant surveillance. The roadside grave sometimes was also the fate of a person killed by lightning.

That these special burials are related to the Dahomean and Yoruban concepts of retribution for crimes against the deities is supported by the similarity of treatment accorded victims of lightning and disease and common criminals. In Haiti, Herkovits observes: "Those who die of smallpox or leprosy, suicides, or persons shot as a punishment for crime are not buried in the communal cemetery, but in special sections of the graveyard," the suicides and criminals being set apart from the others.⁷⁶⁷

Graves found near the seashore, lake shores, or riverbanks frequently are declared to belong to persons who died of drowning.

Approximately nine days after a person's death, the "last prayers" are said, and the soul of the deceased is presumed to have departed from the house. Once more, under the tonnelle outside there are games, storytelling, and singing. On this night, however, there is also drumming and dancing of a special kind. Usually it is the *juba*, or Martinique, dance, which is believed to be specially enjoyed by the dead, and it is the older people, rather than the young, who participate. These festivities are believed to give cheer to the deceased and to "encourage" him on his way. On the next night comes the *mangé mort*, the feast for the family dead, a ritual which continues periodically through the years.

Sometimes in Haiti you may come upon an old tomb or grave before which a dish of specially prepared food has been set. This is part of the *mangé mort* ritual.

A man may make provision in advance of his death for the rites which follow his burial. He may designate special animals to be killed, leave

⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 397-398. Cf. p. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst.
⁷⁶⁷ Herkovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley*, p. 214. Cf. p. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst.]

40 *Death Rites*

763 special funds to defray expenses, or even set a day for the "last prayers";
 764 and it is said that misfortune is likely to overtake his family if his wishes
 are not carried out. Métraux cites a story of a man who had told his wife
 that if he should happen to die on a Sunday she should hold "last prayers"
 for him on a Tuesday. It happened to be a Tuesday when the man died.

They held the burial in the afternoon. As they began the prayers on Wednesday,
 the last prayer finished on Wednesday work. But as Brother Lélan had always said
 they should hold his last prayer on a Tuesday, his wife was quite willing to hold it
 Tuesday. One Tuesday when everyone knew that the last prayer was being held, his
 wife heard her brother-in-law who told her that wasn't customarily done [that is,
 shortening the period of prayers]. Then she put off the last prayer.

Thereupon, according to the story, two strangers appeared in the house.
 They were offered chairs and they sat down. Suddenly, one of the men
 arose and said that the woman had announced that a last prayer was to
 be said that day. She said she had put it off. Then the other man got up
 and said: "Wasn't it today I ordered you to hold the last prayer?" The
 woman asked, "Who are you?" But both men disappeared. The woman
 fell unconscious, and died three days later.]

769 The cycle of honoring, encouraging, and placating the spirits of the
 dead moves continuously. There is no beginning and no end. Although
 those who have died are no longer seen, they are part of the great com-
 munity which encompasses those whose names are remembered and
 those who are forgotten, including ancestors who never left the shores
 of Africa. Death is merely another aspect of life, and its forces are
 ever present.

[761]

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 A [Hall and others, *op. cit.*, p. 193. Cf. p. 350,
 Category 116. — Analyst]

102 *In the Mapou Tree*

171 The connection between the Haitian zombie and certain soulless beings
 715 of West Africa is quite apparent. Herkovits has observed that in
 754 Dahomey there are tales of persons thought to be dead who were found
 wandering in far-off places. These individuals had no memories of their
 former lives. "They were soulless beings, whose death was not real, but
 resulted from the machinations of sorcerers who made them appear as
 dead, and then, when buried, removed them from their graves and sold
 them into servitude in some far-away land."⁴

764 According to stories told by some Haitians, in ceremonies for the
 715 dead where there is suspicion that the deceased was the victim of this
 particular kind of poisoning a close relative stabs the body with a knife
 before burial to assure that it will not become a zombie. In other in-
 stances, close guard is kept over the grave for a number of days and
 nights, so that the body cannot be stolen.

715 Some members of the elite publicly dismiss the whole business as
 729 savage fantasy but privately say something like: "I don't believe in this
 184 sort of thing, but how can you explain the case of Marie Zamham in
 Cap Haitien?" And then they will tell of curious events of which they
 have firsthand knowledge.

538 There are numerous legends of persons who died and were buried,
 705 only to reappear perhaps years later in some mountain village, or in the
 729 big city of Port-au-Prince. An educated man in Port-au-Prince declared
 754 that a dead cousin of his reappeared one day in the city ten years after
 her burial. He tried to speak with her, but she answered only haltingly
 and gave no sign of recognition. After this one appearance, he said, she
 was never seen again. Another Haitian from the north told of a grave-
 yard watch in his village to prevent disinterment of the grave of a young
 girl who had just died. The two watchers dozed fitfully, and suddenly
 awoke to see a man removing the girl's body. When they jumped to
 their feet and went after him he escaped into the shadows. But the
 girl staggered about, fell to the ground, and gave birth to a baby. Both
 the girl and her newborn child were taken to the village and given
 salt to eat. Both of them recovered.

One villager from the southern mountains reported that in his travels
 he came upon a coffee plantation on the sparsely populated mountain
 called Morne la Selle, and found all the laborers to be zombies. They did
 not sing as they worked, their movements were slow and cumbersome,
 and they did not sweat in the hot sun. When he asked for a drink of
 water, no one replied. While he stood trying to converse, the master of
 the plantation came with a hard leather whip and angrily ordered him
 to leave.

* [Herkovits, *Dahomey*, II, p 243. Cf. p. 351, category
 116. -- AnalYST]

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[782] 37. A small graveyard in the mountains at Farcy. The little discs in the tombs are for food offerings on special anniversaries.

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[776] 38. Stone and brick covering of spring on Mont l'Hôpital believed to have been constructed in colonial times. Many persons have testified that here the voices of the lwa have been heard bubbling up with the water.

Dancing and Dance Drama 135

ries to break the tension. The name appears to have come from the word "Caribbean." 535

Magie: A dance accompanying a magic-making ritual.

Poussé: A dance accompanying the making of a poussin.

Calabasse: A dance accompanying the calabash ritual, for the dead.

Dahomey: One of the principal dances of the Vodoun group, named after Dahomey.

Rambouche: Another rra dance, from northern Haiti. Carried over into secular dancing, it has become the commonplace Rambouche.

Rediverger: From northern Haiti.

Manabé, or *Manché*: A dance associated with Dahomey rites, accompanied by percussion music played on small drums hung around the neck.

Assoué: A dance accompanying rites for the assoué drum.

DANCES CONNECTED WITH CONGO AND PÉTRO RITUAL

Péto, or *Des Péto*: The principal dance of the Péto cult.

Kina Moulé: The "Wet Kina," danced for the Simbi family of loa, patrons of rain and the spring. Sometimes called *Dance Simbi*. On rare occasions the Kina Moulé is accepted as Vodoun rather than Péto.

Kina Chéke, or *Sérèr*: The "Dry Kina," danced for loa of the Kina group other than the patrons of the spring. Sometimes identified with Vodoun rites rather than with the Péto.

Bemba, or *Linda*: Named after Congo tribes.

Moundougou: A dance for the loa Moundougou. Named after a tribe in the northern Congo.

Salongo, or *Kina*: From southwestern Haiti. Salongo is the name of a tribe in Angola.

Bombardier: Named after the Bombardiers of northwestern Africa.

Congo Lougue, or *Congo Franc*: Named after Lougue in the Congo.

Congo Masson: The "Masonic" Congo dance, known also as *Congo Larose* and *Congo Cyrille*. Some informants believe the dance originated in a house for called *Société La Rose*, from which it derives one of its names.

Pastoré: A Congo rra dance.

Moussoulé: A battle dance.

Moussoulé: A dance of northern Haiti for paying a debt to a loa.

Moyoupe: This dance is nearly extinct.

Moussou Péto: The "Moussou" dance of the Péto rites.

DANCES ON THE PERIPHERY OF THE VODOUN GROUP

Ibo: Named after the Ibo people of Nigeria and used in rites for the Ibo family of loa.

Kongo or *Capiton*: Named after West African tribes.

DANCES OF THE JURA GROUP

Jaka, or *Martiquet*: Danced on the occasion of *Les Prières*, when the spirit of a newly deceased person has been sent on its way. It is also danced on various occasions, and sometimes at the special request of a loa or an ancestor. [764] [775]

[P 185]

17. Children's World: Gage Songs and Games



On the night of last prayers for a deceased person, and on other party occasions, children while away the hours until bedtime with special songs and games. Sometimes the games are led by an older member of the family. More often, left to their own devices, the children play unsupervised. It is regarded as fitting that the youngest members of the community should be enjoying themselves while the last rites are being held for one who has recently died. This view is held not merely in regard to children; older people, too, engage in gay activities, such as dancing the *Julie*.

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Many children's games are known throughout the country, others have only a regional popularity. The games mentioned here are among those played in southern Haiti, mainly in the neighborhood of the capital, Port-au-Prince.

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One favorite is known as *Balance Yaya*. The children—as few as four or as many as ten or twelve—crouch on the ground in a circle. Each of them has a stone in his hand, which he strikes rhythmically on the earth as they sing together:

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Jesus, Marie, Joseph oh,
 Rat li mangl pignon main.
 Jesus, Marie, Joseph oh,
 Rat li mangl pignon main.
 Rat pond, Robinson pond,
 Pal' ti Marie maché, old li. . . [Ex. 139]

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, oh,
 The rat has eaten my pignon.
 Jesus, Mary, Joseph, oh,
 The rat has eaten my pignon.
 The rat goes by, Robinson goes by,
 Make little Mary walk, go there. . .

350 Notes

as *Amasfor*, *Amasol*, *Amasgrasur*, *Amasur*, etc. *Mystive* is of obvious French origin. *Los* is probably from the *Rainin*, but it could be from the *Yoruba*.

Various methods and formulas are employed in "tying" a loa. Sometimes making the sign of the cross is regarded as adequate, or the saying of a prayer. In "The Vodun Service in Northern Haiti" (*American Anthropologist*, XLII, 242-243), George Easton Simpson reports that the "tying" of a loa sometimes results in a contest between the individual concerned and his *houngan*. If the *houngan* (once the man's *lwa* to come ill, he must neutralize the ritual barriers the "horse" has put in the way. "One procedure for bringing on possession in a servant who has tried to 'die' his chief god is for the priest to stand in front of the person whom he suspects, make the sign of the cross, and strike him on the forehead three times with a sacrificial stone. Usually these blows are hard enough to make blood spurt. The servant then begs the pardon of the angry god, and as soon as possible he unties the knots in his handkerchief [the method he has used for 'tying' his loa]."

¹¹Hirshowitz, *Dahomey*.

CHAPTER 41: Death Rites (pp. 37-40)

¹²Maurice Delafosse, *L'âme nègre*. Translation from *Five France*, special issue No. 4. French Press and Information Service, New York, June, 1945.

¹³Len A. Verwilghen, in booklet describing peoples of the Kwango region, accompanying *Moor of the Western Congo*, recordings issued by the Ethnological Library.

¹⁴Willoughby, *The Soul of the Bush*, pp. 28-29.

¹⁵W. M. Eberle and I. Schapera, "Religious Beliefs and Practices," in Schapera, *The Bush-speaking Tribes of South Africa*, p. 290.

¹⁶Translated from the French of Aphin, *En Haiti*, p. 212.

¹⁷Hirshowitz, *Life in a Haitian Valley*, pp. 213-214.

¹⁸Hall and others, *Haitian Creole*, American Anthropological Association, Memoir No. 34, pp. 188-189.

¹⁹Simpson, "Vodun Ceremonies," *Journal of American Folklore*, April-June, 1946, pp. 155-162.

²⁰As recorded by Courlander from Simpson's *Creole* text, *ibid.*, p. 156. The preceding paragraph is from p. 155.

²¹Translated by Courlander from the *Creole* of Simpson's text.

²²This and the preceding paragraph are from Simpson, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

²³These shells, as indicated elsewhere, are part of the paraphernalia of the Vodun priest and appear to be an inheritance from the priests of the Fa cult of Dahomey. The divining shells are usually thrown on the ground in fours, and the readings depend upon combinations of "heads and tails." The manner of throwing the shells, as well as the number used, corresponds closely with the Haitian secular gambling game *mapambe* (see Appendix 2), though the purpose is obviously different. In some priestly rites in Haiti, where rather than the customary shells are used for divining.

²⁴Simpson, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 161.

²⁶Hirshowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

²⁷Hirshowitz (*ibid.*) notes that persons who die of smallpox, lightning, and certain other phenomena are not buried in coffins. Some of my informants indicated this to be their understanding also, but they said that the dead are buried without coffins for strictly economic reasons as well.

²⁸Simpson, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

²⁹Leysner, *The Haitian People*, p. 196.

³⁰Hirshowitz, *Dahomey*, I, 396.

³¹*Ibid.*, pp. 397-398.

³²Hirshowitz, *Life in a Haitian Valley*, p. 214.

³³Hall and others, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

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and set apart on special plates in a separate room for them; in the afternoon the family eats the food. If the twins to whom homage is being offered are still alive, they must wear special clothes at the sacrifice.

"I believe in the careful cult of the dead . . ." Once more it is necessary to renew one's acquaintance with primitive and folk belief to grasp the Haitian attitude. Life is desirable, death is dreaded; both death and the dead are feared. In the actual world, any excursion from the comfortably familiar countryside of one's home leads to confusion and bewilderment. Except in the company of his fellows (on a religious pilgrimage to the waterfalls at Ville-Bonheur, for example), a Haitian almost never leaves his valley or mountainside and market town. Sophisticated people view the unknown with pleasurable excitement, for they have learned by experience that the unfamiliar is not necessarily frightful; it is quite the contrary with simple folk, whose meagre experience with the unfamiliar has been at least somewhat alarming.

Death is the ultimate unknown. The fearsomeness the imagination conceives to lie beyond death seems to exist in almost direct proportion to people's ignorance of the material world. The fear of ghosts is a commonplace among primitive folk, as among the uneducated in the "civilized" world. Where ghosts are considered powerful, one part of any comprehensive cult will certainly deal with the dead.

In Haitian Vodun the teachings of the Catholic Church have exerted more influence upon the cult of the dead than upon any other part of the religion. The preparation of the corpse for burial shows no traces of African practice; the watch (or wake) and wailing over the deceased is familiar; the funeral itself is conducted by a Catholic priest, with burial in consecrated ground. Thereafter, the continual efforts to secure the tranquil repose of the departed bear the earmarks of faithful Catholic practice; it is at this point, however, that the cult begins to assume distinctive features, for it is firmly believed that the dead exert tremendous power in the world of the living. This power comes from God—the Christian God. The case has been put succinctly by Sumner and Keller: "The relation between man and ghost resolves itself . . . into a relation of rights and duties, with all the rights on one side and all the duties on the other." God gives

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